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# News Release



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## **RECOVERY PLAN PUBLISHED FOR WENATCHEE MOUNTAINS CHECKER-MALLOW**

The final recovery plan was published in today's *Federal Register* for the Wenatchee Mountains checker-mallow (*Sidalcea oregana* var. *calva*), one of the rarest plants in Washington State. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service listed the plant as endangered on December 22, 1999. Critical habitat was designated for this species on September 6, 2001.

The plan describes specific criteria and actions needed to recover the checker-mallow and remove it from Federal protection. Among the plan's recommendations is a call for developing partnerships with public land managers and private landowners in order to effectively conserve and enhance the species and its habitat. The plan calls for immediate actions to stabilize the existing populations and increase population sizes and geographic distribution across the historical range of the species.

"We welcome ideas and partnerships that could bring the checker-mallow back from the brink of extinction," said Dave Allen, Regional Director of the Service's Pacific Region.

The goal of the Endangered Species Act is to recover listed species to the point where they are secure, self-sustaining members of their ecosystems and no longer need federal protection. A recovery plan is a blueprint providing guidance for actions by federal, state and other public agencies and private interests that will lead to the recovery and delisting of a species. Recovery plans are advisory only. They do not obligate the expenditure of funds or require that the recommended actions be implemented.

The document was developed by Service biologists as well as botanists, plant ecologists, and planners from the Washington Department of Natural Resource's Natural Heritage and Natural Area Programs, the U.S. Forest Service, and other agencies, as well as non-governmental organizations.

The Wenatchee Mountains checker-mallow is native to Chelan County, Washington, where it is found in the wetlands and moist meadows of its namesake. Only five populations are known to exist, and four of the populations range from eight to a few hundred individual plants. Populations occur on a mixture of private, State, and Federal lands.

The primary threats to the checker-mallow include: habitat fragmentation, degradation, or loss due to conversion of native wetlands to orchards and other agricultural uses; rural residential development; altered hydrology; competition and encroachment from native and nonnative plants; recreational impacts; and activities associated with fire suppression. Recovery of this species requires establishing stable, self-sustaining populations on protected sites and managing or eliminating threats to these populations.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal Federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting and enhancing fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 95-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System which encompasses 544 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas. It also operates 69 national fish hatcheries, 64 fishery resource offices and 81 ecological services field stations. The agency enforces Federal wildlife laws, administers the Endangered Species Act, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Aid program that distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state fish and wildlife agencies.